

78. Can you explain to me how you find the alterations of weight in your handwriting in the journal after the correct weight had been entered?—These were isolated cases where probably the weights had been entered—that is the *bona fide* correct weights; on a calling back I was directed to alter these weights.

79. In those instances of alteration in the journal, in whose handwriting would the weights appear in the order-book?—I could not tell you.

80. Would it be in your handwriting?—Probably mine; probably Coleman's, probably Bridson's.

81. If in your handwriting, where would you get them?—In the yard-book.

82. Or from Mr. Bridson?—Repeat your question.

83. You say you entered the weights first; you say they might be in your handwriting in the order-book: Where would you get the information from to enter them in the order-book?—From the yard-book.

84. You spoke of those "isolated cases"?—I was speaking from memory.

85. How many of these charges that you have brought would be of that kind?—I cannot say from memory.

86. Did you keep a note all this time of the irregularities?—I took notes.

87. Each time?—Not each time.

88. But you took notes of the irregularities?—Yes, at the time.

89. Retaining the note very carefully?—Yes.

90. How were you able to tell the discrepancies when they were only dictated to you for entry in the public-works journal; how were you able to tell that there were discrepancies, for the purpose of keeping your notes?—By watching things.

91. You did not see them weighed?—No, I did not see them weighed.

*The Chairman*: I think, Mr. Skerrett, you are now going somewhat further than was intended you should go in this direction.

*Mr. Skerrett*: Very well, Sir, I shall conclude.

*The Chairman*: You can now proceed, Mr. Menteath, with the details. You had better take them in the order of date.

*Mr. Menteath*: On the 15th of February, voucher 8, 8th March.

94. *Mr. Hutchison*.] Was that the order for the sash-cord?—Yes.

95. Had you not better get at the initiation of this business, at the beginning, so as to trace the whole thing from the commencement?

*Witness*: A number of the requisitions are not here. The 8th of March is the date when it was supplied. It was supplied to the Mount View Asylum.

97. *Mr. Menteath*.] The voucher would be in the Treasury Department, would it not?—Yes, if paid.

*Mr. Hutchison*: We should have all the vouchers here——

*Mr. Blow*: This was a contract of £6,000 a year.

*Mr. Hutchison*: That does not matter; this is a public inquiry, and our business is to inquire into everything connected with the manner in which this contract has been carried out. We cannot do that without having all the evidence it is possible to obtain before us.

*Mr. Reid*: The Government is prepared to produce everything the Committee wants.

*Mr. Blow*: For the Wellington contracts for supplies the vouchers can be easily obtained; but some of them are in Napier, or Wanganui, or other places, so that it would take some time to produce them. Every voucher will be produced that the Committee requires.

98. *Mr. Hutchison* (to witness).] What book is that you have in your hand?—The Government contract journal.

99. And this particular voucher, is it for supplies to the Mount View Asylum?—Yes.

*The Chairman*: We will have to see that Mr. Blow produces whatever documents are required.

100. *Mr. Hutchison*.] When the voucher is passed by the certifying officer is it detached from the other paper?—I cannot say precisely.

101. *Mr. Menteath*.] Referring to this item of the sash-cord, do you trace that in the order-book?—Yes; folio 42 in the Government contract journal, there are two hanks mentioned of No. 8 Silverlake sash-cord, charged at 7½lb. per hank.

102. *Mr. Hutchison*.] Can you say what is the order?—Yes; two hanks of No. 8, and two hanks of No. 10.

103. Can we find from that what the price was?—Yes; it is entered as item 757 and 758.

104. What is the price?—7 to 12, in Wellington, 1s. 6d.; 10 to 12, 1s. 7d. per pound.

105. These are standard weights?—Yes; they are standard weights.

106. What do you find in the first book?—7½lb. per hank for No. 8, 9½lb. for No. 10.

107. What is meant by "standard weight" in respect of this class of goods?—Expert evidence would have to be called to prove that these hanks did not exceed a certain weight.

108. *Mr. Menteath*.] Do you know this from practice or experience?—My practice in this matter does not go so far as to make me certain.

109. What might be the weight?—About 3lb. for the hank from 8 to 12, and from 3½lb. to 4lb. for No. 10. The 7½ for No. 8, and 9½ for No. 10, both are charged at 1s. 6d. per pound; they are both marked of "B" quality, the "A" quality should be charged at 1s. 7d.

110. What is it in the order-book?—Two hanks of No. 8, and two hanks of No. 10.

111. "B" quality is supplied?—Yes.

112. Assuming that these are of the average weight, what do you prove from these entries?—The first line is charged about 4lb. too much, the second about 5½lb. too much.

*Mr. Hutchison*: There is a difference of about 6lb. a hank in these——